

The Builder.

No. CCCCLXXII.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1852.



Wednesday evening, the 18th, the committee of the Architectural Exhibition received in their galleries, in Regent-street, a large number of visitors, including many ladies, and men connected with science and art. We cannot pretend to give the names of all who were present (perhaps 700), but we view the matter with so much interest that we will record those that we can recall, or whose names we saw on cards, without any endeavour to put them in proper order,—namely, Earl de Grey, Mr. Justice Talford, Sir C. Eastlake, Messrs. Heywood, M.P. J. Bell, H. Pickersgill, R.A.; Knight, R.A.; Cockerell, R.A.; Donaldson, Charles Hill, Lord Lovelace, W. Tooke, F.R.S.; T. Pettigrew, F.R.S.; Dr. Lang, Dr. Dickson, Gaikoin, Lewis Pocock, F.S.A.; C. Pearson, B. Oliviera, Hector Horeau, Herr Liebt, Beaumont, Little, Chantrell, C. C. Nelson, Rev. J. Hunter, Allom, Field, Papworth, Cantwell, Fergusson, Lamb, D. Wyatt, Roberts, Griffith, W. P. Griffith, F.S.A.; Scoles, E. Sharpe, S. Lahee, White, Talbot Bury, Laxton, Richardson, Le Keux, Wilks, Truett, C. H. Smith, Stevens, Fowler, Seddon, Dudley, Dr. Hodgkin, Lieutenant Lewis, Martineau, Taylor, Dr. Steggall, Col. Baillie, &c. &c.

In addition to the permanent objects of interest on the walls, bronzes, drawings, and other works of art were liberally scattered over the tables. At half-past nine o'clock, by way of giving some special point of interest to the meeting,—

Professor Cockerell begged leave to propose that the Earl de Grey should take the chair, in order that a brief notice of the Institution might be laid before them. It was quite unnecessary for him to dilate on the fitness of his Lordship for the post, for all there knew how long and worthily he had been connected with the profession.

The pressure was so considerable that note-taking was out of the question, and we must content ourselves with giving the substance of what was said.

Earl de Grey, on taking the chair, expressed the great pleasure and gratification he felt in presiding over such a meeting. He was glad to be able to address them as *ladies* and gentlemen. The Architectural Association was only an infant institution, and the charge of its infancy could not be in better hands than those of the ladies. That the society was one peculiarly wanted there was ample evidence. There had been for many years an Academy; and within its walls there was a room that had long been, and he believed was still called, the "Architectural Room;" in which many admirable drawings were annually exhibited. But such was the arrangement of them, through want of space, that in looking for a particular building, the eye was attracted by a portrait above; and what appeared to have been the capital of a column was found on closer inspection to be the head of a lady. The Archi-

tectural Exhibition had been established to remedy this want, and the works exhibited upon its walls afforded the best evidence of its success. He did not scruple to assert that every one of those works possessed some kind of merit, whether originality, or ingenuity, or taste; and whatever their merits now, there could be no doubt that if the public showed proper appreciation of the author's endeavours, in another year they would be very much increased. He was himself independent of architects. There was a well-known proverb which told them that the man who was his own lawyer had a fool for his client; and it might be also said, that the man who builds his own house will have a bad customer. He had proved the truth of this to his cost. He had the greatest admiration and respect for architecture and its professors, and rejoiced that it was in his power to render any service, however trifling, to the objects they all had in view. He would now call upon Professor Donaldson, who had undertaken to read a report drawn up by the committee.

Professor Donaldson then read a brief account of the progress of the endeavour, from which we take the following:—

"The first effort ever made to establish an exclusively architectural exhibition in London was in 1845, at the rooms then occupied by the Society of Architectural Draughtsmen, in Southampton-street, Strand. The exhibitors were all members of that society, and the exhibition was free. Early in 1847, this society received a large accession of members, and its objects and ideas were greatly enlarged. It was, in fact, entirely re-formed, and merged into the present architectural association, established at Lyon's-lan-hall. In the new prospectus, 'the establishment of an annual exhibition of architectural art' was prominently set forward. In the course of session 1847-48, two or three *conversazioni* were held, at which the walls and tables of the hall were covered with drawings; and in the report read at the opening meeting of the session 1848-49, they were alluded to as follows:—

"From the great success which attended these *conversazioni*, your committee do not despair of obtaining what becomes year by year a greater desideratum in this metropolis, an annual exhibition exclusively architectural. When we reflect upon the number of drawings (necessarily from want of sufficient space) refused annually at the Royal Academy, upon the scores of competition drawings of real merit almost daily returned to their designers, and upon the many valuable studies from existing buildings shut up in private portfolios, it surely cannot be construed into any spirit of mock rivalry with any existing institution, if we endeavour to frame some scheme by which the art-loving public may become better acquainted with some of these."

Shortly after this a sub-committee was appointed, and the first Exhibition was opened on the 7th of March, at the gallery of the New Society of Painters in Water Colours. Among the earliest visitors it may be mentioned, was the late Sir Robert Peel, who spoke very encouragingly of its prospects. The total number of visitors was about 8,000, including H. R. H. Prince Albert, the Duke of Wellington, the late Marquis of Northampton, the Earl de Grey, and many others, whose names are well known and respected in the literary and scientific world.

The next exhibition was opened at the same gallery in 1850, from August 10th to October 3rd. After the close of this exhibition, it was determined to ask an equal number of gentlemen, not members of the association, to join in forming an entire committee of management. This was done, and the first meeting of the entire committee was held February 17th, 1851.

In 1851, obstacles prevented the opening of an exhibition, and it was resolved that the donors be requested to allow their donations to become annual subscriptions,—a proposition since assented to almost universally; while the proposition to add a collection of materials, &c. bearing upon architecture was favourably received, and promises to be eventually a most important part of all future exhibitions.

The committee availed themselves of the first opportunity that offered in taking the present galleries for their exhibition of 1852. It was deter-

mined to charge an admission fee, which, as it included a catalogue, would be very small, and it is believed cannot prevent any who feel real interest from attending; nevertheless, it is still a question whether the original plan of making this a free exhibition ought not to be adhered to."

The report showed reasons why there would probably be a balance against the committee in the end; "the committee have, however, the fullest confidence in the ultimate entire success of the undertaking, and look forward to a time when the exhibition, by an increased interest on the part of the public, will become self-supporting, as it ought to be."

Mr. Godwin said the privilege had been deputed to him of proposing a vote of thanks to the Right Hon. Earl de Grey, for his ready assent to the request of the committee, that he would preside. It was not unusual for distinguished individuals to refuse their countenance to new Institutions; nor could they be blamed for doing so. They had not time to inquire into the real merits of all the schemes that were proposed to them, and they feared to risk their position by joining what, if not hurtful, might at best be evanescent. But if we could not blame these, we might praise those who, obeying a friendly impulse, or more far-seeing into the merits of a proposition, gave at once their aid to advance it. It had happened to him, the speaker said, if they would pardon an egotistical observation, to receive from Earl de Grey's hands the first public testimonial of approbation in the shape of the medal of the Institute of Architects. It was several years ago, he was sorry to say, but it would be many more before he forgot the kind words of encouragement which accompanied the presentation, and he was, therefore, particularly glad of an opportunity to testify his respect. Since that time much had been done for architectural study. Architecture had been for many years in a declining state, and men were contented to copy instead of think. He ventured to believe, however, that we were now preparing to take a better road. There were numerous agencies at work; there was greater freedom of thought, more earnest endeavours to obtain principles, and he looked hopefully to the future. This *conversazione*, and the enlistment of the ladies, he thought a happy idea. Men of education even now felt no shame in admitting that they knew nothing of architecture; but if we could once thoroughly interest the ladies in our art,—that art whose mission it is to eternalize fine ideas,—that art which had covered the world with thought-giving monuments, the admiration of succeeding generations, and the ruins of which led one to say earnestly—

"Out upon time! who for ever will leave
But enough of the past for the future to grieve
O'er that which hath been and that which
must be."

this reproach would disappear. He feared, however, to detain them, and would redeem his own tediousness by proposing a vote of warm thanks to Earl de Grey for his aid and presence.

We need not say that the vote was carried by acclamation. In reply,

The Chairman said he was exceedingly obliged by the very kind manner in which he had been received. Having already expressed his sympathy with their objects and his wishes for their success, he could only repeat expressions of the real, honest, hearty pleasure which he felt in being of the slightest use to the association.

With this the actual *business* of the evening closed; but in another of the rooms Mr. Charles Pearson gave a clear and interesting exposition of his scheme for the junction of railways in the line of the Fleet Valley, which was listened to by a large audience. The meeting was eminently successful, and we mark the importance we attach to it, as an epoch, by giving this prominent position to a notice of it.

Great praise is due to Mr. Fergusson and